

BEYOND 'THAT'S SO GAY'

A National Challenging Homophobia Tour

LGBT Postcards from the Edge



TOUR WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT, GEELONG (AGAIN) FULL CIRCLE, DONE AND DUSTED...

In an extension of Week 32 and "The Recap Episode", here is a full summary of my 38-week national challenging homophobia tour.

But before I do I wanted to share a reflection of Rodney Croome about Outlink (1999-2000) and Beyond 'That's So Gay':

When Daniel told me he was planning to travel around the country talking to rural and regional young LGBT people and their service providers, my thoughts naturally turned to when I did the same ten years earlier. In 1998 I was employed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to travel to regional and rural centres and create a network of LGBT young people to be called Outlink.



The idea for Outlink was hatched by then Human Rights Commissioner, Chris Sidoti, after he launched the Working It Out report, a needs analysis for young LGBT people on Tasmania's North West Coast, in Ulverstone in 1998. Ulverstone was the site of some of the worst homophobia during the long and bitter gay law reform campaign of the 1990s. The NW Coast had also seen some tragic gay youth suicides as a result of that homophobia. I was intimately involved in the gay law reform campaign and in putting together the WIO report. As a result I was dedicated to the idea that young LGBT people should be free to live in and contribute to the rural and regional communities they grow up in. For all these reasons I guess it made sense for Chris to ask me to head Outlink.

I can't say I jumped at the idea. My experience in Tasmania left me feeling that it would be hard to contact, let alone empower, young LGBT people in rural Australia. I knew I would become the focus of a lot of unmet need, and I wasn't sure I was up to it. I was partly right. Arranging meetings, travelling long distances, doing media interviews, spending time with different people, and following up the meetings, while also assembling a network and

seeking funding for it, was too much work for one person. But what kept me going was the surprising number of successful projects I discovered along the way. It quickly emerged that things were not uniformly bad across rural and regional Australia. There were many inspiring initiatives breaking down prejudice and discrimination. The problem was they had almost no contact with each other. Their orientation was almost always to their state capitals, which meant their self-image was one of permanent inferiority rather than what it should have been, great achievement.

The idea of a network was perfectly suited to bringing all these isolated projects together. And it succeeded for a while, with the formation of a committee of young people and service providers that met in Sydney. The problem was a lack of on-going funding. I was particularly burnt by the empty promises of policy-makers and philanthropic funds that said they could find us the dollars to keep going but who never came through. Outlink limped along for a couple of years and eventually dissolved.

But the dream didn't die. Daniel Witthaus was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the project in his then role as the co-ordinator of GASP in Geelong. He was convinced rural and regional communities have great potential, not only to change themselves, but to renew the entire nation. Daniel was determined to realise the potential he saw in Outlink. But being the methodical person he is, Daniel knew he would have to plan things very carefully if another national tour was to succeed. This is why he approached me. He wanted to know, honestly, what had worked and what hadn't with Outlink. I warned him about the exhaustion and urged him to take it slow. I warned him about the unmet need, and urged him to keep his boundaries very clear. I warned him about the funding problem, and urged him to keep up the profile of his tour, not just in regional and rural areas, but in metro centres where the money is. I can't say he took all my advice, but I can say his tour was a success.

The challenge now is to make sure those policy-makers and philanthropic trusts that failed Outlink, can realise the dream of a network of young rural and regional LGBT people based on Daniel's tour. But if they don't, I guess it's not the end of the world. Clearly, there's a need for such a network that goes beyond the vision and work of any one person or group of people. One day it will happen, and all the work of people like me, Daniel, and all those folk who believe there's a future for LGBT young people in rural and regional Australia, will finally bear fruit.

Rodney Croome.



Here are some of the highlights of the 38-week national challenging homophobia tour. All of this and much more can be read about in the weekly location blogs at www.thatssogay.com.au

Tour location video blogs can be found at www.youtube.com/user/tennisdan

Tour Week One: Geelong, VIC

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS - FROM PRISCILLA TO THE LLEYLANDS...

Daniel launches the national tour in his hometown of Geelong where the Mayor gets his name wrong and makes some very frank, personal admissions. Daniel gets kicked out of a local writing festival, yet marches in an annual multicultural parade with local LGBT young people. (see also video blog)

Tour Week Two: Mt Gambier, SA

BE CAREFUL OF THE WAY YOU WALK IN 'THE MOUNT'...

Daniel visits the local Catholic school and hears about it's seeming LGBT origins and it's link to saint-to-be, Mary McKillop. Daniel talks "Ellen" about her PDA role reversal with her partner. Daniel catches up with two friends from his past, one unhappy with Daniel being pigeon-toed. (see also video blog)



Tour Week Three: Adelaide, SA

SIMPLY HOLDING THE HAND OF THE ONE THEY LOVE WITHOUT FEAR...

Daniel talks with local LGBT young people and hears their hopes to one day be able to hold hands publicly with their partners. Daniel talks in depth with "Markus" who challenges the conventional thinking on being "out" at school. Daniel hears from his first parent of the tour. (see also video blog)



Tour Week Four: Port Lincoln, SA

MY LIFE AS AN AMWAY SALESMAN...

Daniel meets a local Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer with some colourful views. Daniel watches, during an “Amway” spiel as a Department of Education senior official who literally recoils in his presence. Daniel meets “Jack” who has everything he wants in Port Lincoln except a boyfriend. (see also video blog)

Tour Week Five: Esperance, Kalgoorlie, WA

THE DAY I STARED DOWN HOMOPHOBIC TRUCKERS...

Daniel travels across the Nullabor and almost gets physical with a pair of homophobic truckers in Caiguna. Daniel talks with “Mini” about coming out to her grandmother on Facebook and getting her approval online. Daniel randomly runs in to an old Berlin friend. (see also video blog)

Tour Week Six: Not Indonesia, Perth, WA

HOW ASIA-PACIFIC DELEGATES MIMIC VICTORIA TEACHERS...

Daniel cancels an international LGBT human rights project after a terrorist threat in Indonesia. Daniel discusses his international experiences and how this has shaped his work. Daniel revisits a conversation with Catholic school hierarchy about “idol time”. (see also video blog)



Tour Week Seven: Albany, WA

WHEN THERE ARE PLENTY OF WOMEN WHO LOOK LIKE DYKES, BUT AREN'T...

Daniel meets with local mainstream organisations and ponders inclusion. Daniel meets with Albany pioneer organisation, Young House. Daniel meets local LGBT young people through the True Colours program. (see also video blog)



Tour Week Eight: Bunbury, WA

TOO CLOSE TO PERTH?: GAY IMPERIALISM AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA...

Daniel hears about how Bunbury might get a gay pride parade. Daniel speaks to “Alan” about growing up in Bunbury and how rural might be better than regional. Daniel meets with the second of the True Colours programs. (see also video blog)

Tour Week Nine: Perth, WA

PICKING AND CHOOSING: LGBT INCLUSION...

Daniel attends a beyondblue consultation and believes there might have been traction achieved. Daniel meets “Anita”, an award winning teacher who has experienced more homophobia than most. Daniel meets an array of current and former politicians. (see also video blog)

Tour Week Ten: Geraldton, WA

I JUST BLEW IN FROM THE WINDY CITY: MEETING GERO'S ANSWER TO PRINCE FRED AND PRINCESS MARY...

Daniel meets a long-time supporter in policewoman, “Isabel”. Daniel finds out about the informal LGBT adult community and how it differs from LGBT young people’s experience. Daniel visits local schools and youth organisations, meeting Geraldton’s answer to Prince Frederick and Princess Mary.



Tour Week Eleven: Broome, WA

THE GAYEST MAN IN BABYLON (OR BROOME)...

Daniel experiences Groundhog Day with a local school chaplain, yet sees movement. Daniel meets “Steven”, protected by a local band of Indigenous brothers and hears of a little boy who covets pearls. Daniel happens across “Percy”, a man with a remarkable story and journey as not a “gay butler”.

Tour Week Twelve: Kimberleys, WA

LIKENED TO A PEDOPHILE: FROM GEELONG TO DARWIN...

Daniel precariously stays with school friend, “Liz”, on the grounds of a Catholic primary school. Daniel meets a young men’s guru in Kununurra. Daniel stays with his ex, “Shane” and pushes his housemate’s buttons.

Tour Week Thirteen: Darwin, NT

SUPPORTING OUR RIGHT TO SUFFER: SWEATING IN THE SHADE...

Daniel celebrates the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), co-presenting to local teachers and health professionals. Daniel runs into a Berlin colleague who recognises him off YouTube. Daniel meets “David” who befriended effeminate boys at school and then beat up anyone who bullied them.

Tour Week Fourteen: Alice Springs, NT

BREATHING IN YOUR SURROUNDS: IT DOESN'T COST A CENT TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK...

Daniel travels through Katherine and hears about a high-profile gay AFL footballer, and meeting someone from his old high school. Daniel finds out how much his book has helped “Isabel” and her son. Daniel meets Chloe, who undertook a roadtrip to immigration detention centres.



Tour Week Fifteen: Remote, NT

HITTING A CENTURY IN REMOTE AUSTRALIA: DEFYING EXPECTATIONS...

Daniel travels to a remote Indigenous community with “Damien” and the fascinating, “Jim”. Daniel hears about Indigenous communities from “Leo”. Daniel is enchanted by “Amber” and her story of being a transgender treasure.

Tour Week Sixteen: Mt Isa, QLD

BROKEN LESDARS: WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY (AND A BOWL OF PEA & HAM SOUP) MAKES...

Daniel meets the hilarious “David” and hears that his move to Mt Isa is not what most would expect. Daniel’s week is “saved” by local policewoman, “Jane” and a bowl of homemade soup. Daniel meets former gay cattle rustler “Jon”, and hears his remarkable tale.

Tour Week Seventeen: Cairns, QLD

FROM GAY DESERT TO GAY BUBBLE: FALLING DEEPLY IN LGBT ACTIVIST LOVE...

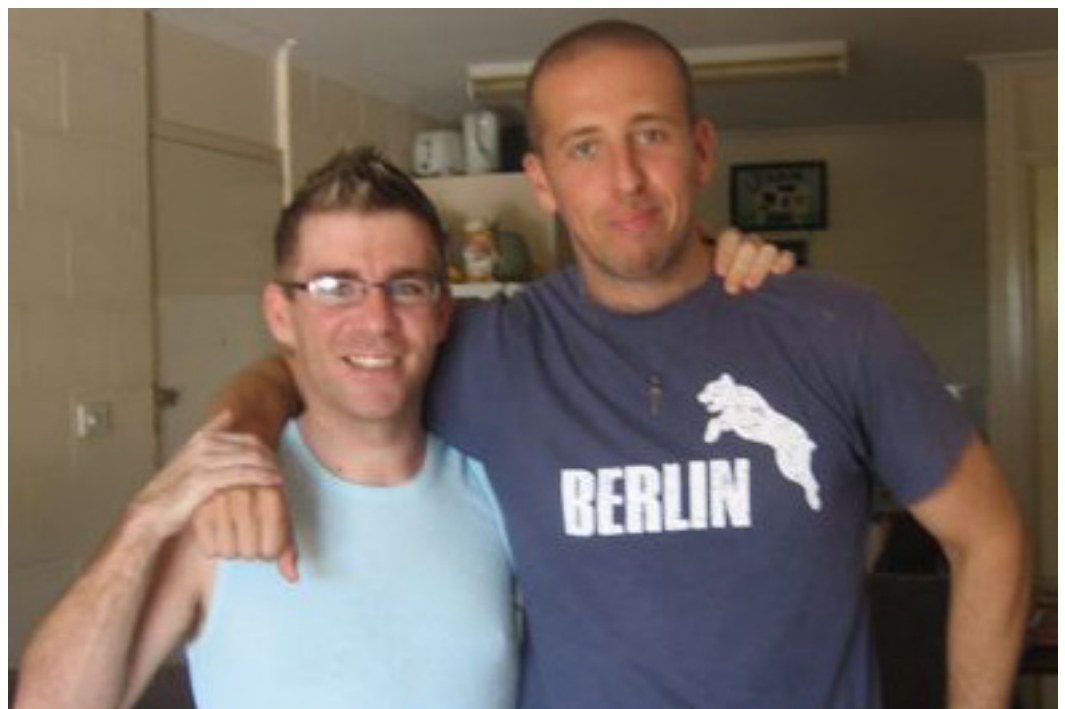
Daniel lands at gay resort Turtle Cove and meets “Ken”, long-time LGBT mover and shaker. Daniel meets his first gay activist crush, although is almost thwarted by his broken foot. Daniel chats with “Grant” and “Prue” about their experiences in student welfare at the local high school.

Tour Week Eighteen: Townsville, QLD

UNDERESTIMATIONS: FROM BROWNSVILLE TO TOWNSVILLE...

Daniel hears the bloodcurdling tale of “Rob” and his near-death, homophobic, experience. Daniel meets with the local anti-violence project, meeting “Madge” from the local transgender support group along the way. Daniel spends time with “Guy”, whose reasons for getting baptised were not completely pure of mind.

(see also video blog)



Tour Week Nineteen: Mackay et al, QLD

THE GOOD DOCTOR AND HIS "WIFE": CONTRIBUTION RURAL STYLE...

Daniel meets "Darren" and "Mark" who have both returned to Mackay for family and because of their connection to their place. Daniel spends an incredible few days with Vinny, the good doctor, and Jono, his wife, in rural Queensland. Not wanting to leave, Daniel takes part in an impromptu photo shoot with the talented, persuasive Jono.

(see also video blogs x 3)

Tour Week Twenty: Brisbane, Part I, QLD

PLAYING TAG: AFTER MIDNIGHT, WE GONNA LET IT ALL [COME] OUT...

Daniel meets, and stays with, the delightful, charming family of My Gay Queensland in rural Queensland. Daniel spends time with local LGBT young people at Open Doors. Daniel finds out more about Indigenous lesbians through "Kerry".

Tour Week Twenty-One: Brisbane, Part II, QLD

WHISTLING JELLY BEANS BATMAN: I'VE GOT THIS UNCLE YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...

Daniel meets "Charlie" who is thriving by combining teaching and his LGBT professional life. Daniel hears from "Joan" about mainstream transgender organisations and the challenges in supporting gender diverse young people. Daniel talks with Relationships Australia, alters the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities' view of Mt Isa and presents to Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association trainees. Daniel also experiences inner city homophobia whilst holding hands with "Viv".



Tour Week Twenty-Two: Gold Coast, QLD

ORDINARY, EVERYDAY LIVES: BEYOND PLASTIC, BLING AND HOT TEDDIES...

Daniel hears from “Lesley” about the experiences of local LGBT young people. Daniel meets school based workers, “Jodie” and “Tanya”. Daniel hears how people like “Jo/e” can “fit” into transgender support groups.

Tour Week Twenty-Three: Lismore, NSW

LESMORE: GAY NIRVANA, TINY TEDDIES AND LIGHTBULB MOMENTS...

Daniel, wearing his ankh, bumps into “Granny Sheila”, a former aerobics instructor and landscape gardener at the gym. Daniel is delighted to chat with “Marg” and later meet her family (and consume a roast meal!). Daniel hears from “Tom” about local LGBT young people and their relationship to Tropical Fruits.

Tour Week Twenty-Four: Sydney, NSW

A BUS RIDE AWAY: BEYOND PRISONS OF PRETEND...

Daniel finds out through Anthony Venn-Brown about LGBT people’s relationship with evangelical and charismatic faiths. Daniel gorges on chocolate cupcakes whilst visiting “Mel’s” school in outer Sydney. Daniel enjoys meeting the young LGBT people at Twenty10.

Tour Week Twenty-Five: Newcastle, NSW

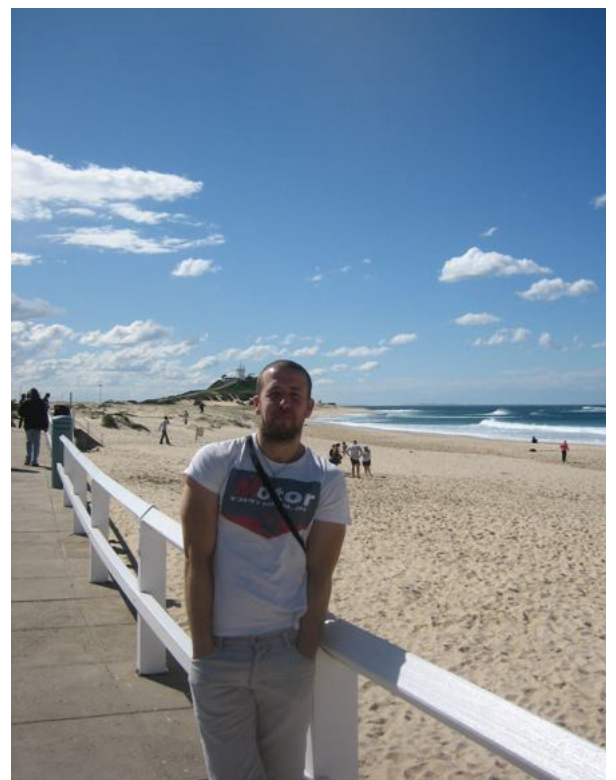
MISSED CONNECTIONS: ON BEING SLIGHTLY BATTERED, RATHER BRUISED...

Despite a series of cancellations, Daniel manages to have a week of interviews and to get a roof over his head thanks to “Clark” and “Ellen”, parents of “Nick”. Daniel meets “Gina” who was pivotal in a series of NSW Beyond ‘That’s So Gay’ events with the NSW Teachers Federation. Daniel hears the heart wrenching, yet uplifting story of “Simon”.

Tour Week Twenty-Six: Bathurst, NSW

WINNING SEMI-GAY BATHURST TRIVIA: PASSING TO PAY “LAST [DECADE’S] RENT”...

Daniel hears about “passing” in town from the Queer Collective’s “Wade”. Daniel watches Steve, the towering ex-army, Tasmanian become LGBT-friendly right before his watering eyes. Daniel hits the stage with Sydney “Louis” to challenge homophobia after a local performance of Rent in Orange.



Tour Week Twenty-Seven: Canberra, ACT

CAUSE FOR CELEBRATIONS: TRIVIA NIGHT IPHONE INTEGRITY, OCCASIONAL TEACHERS AND MISTAKEN FOR STRAIGHT...

In his birthday week and in the wake of the then-undecided Federal Election, Daniel hears about the evolution of “Grant” from LGBT youth group participant, to facilitator to guest speaker. Daniel meets local transgender support worker, “Andrea”. Daniel navigates iPhone integrity and meets “Leroy” for the second time, the first time being in Berlin, at an AIDS Fundraiser Trivia Night.

Tour Week Twenty-Eight: Broken Hill, NSW

*F*CK WE’VE MOVED ON HERE: SNAIL PENISES, SOFT DISCRIMINATION AND PRISCILLA...*

Daniel meets local celebrities, photographer, Robin, and son of carpet messer-upper-er, Pro Hart, “Harry”. Daniel hears about local “grading” systems and ponders “that’s so gay” as “soft discrimination” with “Vic”. Daniel spends time in a remote community with an inspiring local teacher: “Elaine”.



Tour Week Twenty-Nine: Mildura, VIC

A FAIR WHACK OF HOMOPHOBIA: HUMPTY REVISITED, EROTIC HANDSHAKES AND BEING DISCREETLY OPEN...

Back once again in Victoria, Daniel hears about “Therese’s” experience of being openly lesbian in the Sunraysia region. Daniel visits the local LGBT support group meeting “Jeff”, a gay man who “ran the roughest pub in town”. After meeting former Swan Hill resident, “Fred”, Daniel drives there along bulging rivers and gets a sobering assessment of modern day life for LGBT young people from “Wendy”.



Tour Week Thirty: Ballarat, VIC

NOT AT THE PACE I'D LIKE: REFRAMING, GREEN TEA AND FETCHING BIG NANNA...

Daniel compares the individual efforts of the likes of "Malcolm" and the collective impact of school staff at "Phoebe's" school. Daniel catches up with Zaque's "Karl" and hears about the challenges and successes of local LGBT young people. Daniel learns the art of making green tea and homophobia in local schools from "Olly" and "Vin".

Tour Week Thirty-One: Warrnambool, VIC

JUST AS HARD, IF NOT HARDER: MAN CRUSHES, GRAND FINAL REPLAYS AND CHAIN SAWS AT 80FT...

Daniel revisits his first same-sex relationship in Colac whilst meeting local LGBT young people. Daniel trains teachers, health professionals and homophobia-curious others in Warrnambool. Daniel meets local LGBT youth worker, "Rose" and hears, in AFL Grand Final Week (Part One), how she had her first same-sex kiss 20 years ago when Collingwood last won the Grand Final.

Tour Week Thirty-Two: School Holidays, VIC

THE RECAP EPISODE...

You've seen those US shows where they do the recap episode in order to drag it out one more week. Well welcome to that stage of the tour! Daniel spent one week of the Victorian school holidays looking back, tying up some loose ends and preparing for the final legs of his national project. Daniel looked back on some of the highlights of the first 31 weeks of the 38-week national challenging homophobia tour.



Tour Week Thirty-Three: Shepparton, VIC

TALKING ABOUT OUR KIDS AGAIN - LGBT FISH 'N' CHIPS AND BEING TRUMPED BY A PUPPY AND A FLUFFY DUCKLING...

Daniel hears from local LGBT young people that perhaps their town is not so bad after all. Daniel speaks to local parents, with Phyllis "coming out" as the mother of a gay son to a close friend and "Lydia" forcing it down people's throats. After a successful training session with local teachers and health professionals, Daniel reflects on all the US media attention on gay teen suicides.



Tour Week Thirty-Four: Gippsland, VIC

A RETURN TO SILENCE - THE LITTLE LGBT GRAVY TRAIN THAT COULD, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE...

Daniel revisits Bairnsdale a decade after their first LGBT steps. Daniel hears from Eve about local LGBT people's experience of small towns and workplaces. Daniel speaks to local LGBT young people's group, Whatever, with "Zoe", "Moira" and Jack.



Tour Weeks Thirty-Five and Six: Tasmania

OPTING IN OR OUT: MARILYN MUNROE WHISPERS AND COMING A LONG WAY...

Daniel talks with rural farm boy, "Neil" about not getting struck by lightning in church. Daniel hears from local health professionals about what's happening in Tasmania's north. Daniel revisits "Lee", who he trained years ago in Pride & Prejudice, who has been out as lesbian in both primary and secondary schools.

Tour Weeks Thirty-Seven: Melbourne, VIC

(SORT OF) SNEAKING BACK IN, SHORT AND SHARP...

Daniel talks with Rainbow Network Victoria about Beyond 'That's So Gay': The Tour Diaries. Daniel "digs deeper" with a familiar voice. Daniel revisits the bush telegraph.

Tour Weeks Thirty-Eight: Geelong (Tour End), VIC

THAT'S THIS WEEK!!!





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'THAT'S SO GAY'
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